

## Report of County Judge R. T. Lightfoot Relating to the Public Improvements of McCracken County.

**PRESENT COUNTY OFFICERS.**  
R. T. Lightfoot, county judge.  
Alben Barkley, county attorney.  
Eli Boone, county clerk.  
Joe Miller, circuit clerk.  
John Ogilvie, sheriff.  
J. C. Utterback, treasurer.  
James Baker, jailer.  
Frank Baker, jailer.  
Dr. L. E. Young, county physician.  
Everett Wren, surveyor.  
John Thompson, road supervisor.  
W. A. Thompson, sanitarian.  
Jack W. Nelson, probation officer.

**MEMBERS OF FISCAL COURT**  
George Broadfoot, First district.  
J. J. Bleich, Second district.  
C. W. Emery, Third district.  
John Burnett, Fourth district.  
Saunders Brooks, Fifth district.  
W. A. Dunnaway, Sixth district.  
F. G. Sholson, Seventh district.  
C. I. Knott, Eighth district.

**COUNTY OFFICERS-ELECT.**  
Alben Barkley, county judge.  
Saunders Clay, county attorney.  
Gus G. Singleton, county clerk.  
Joe Miller, circuit clerk.  
George Houser, sheriff.  
Henry Houser, jailer.  
Frank Baker, corner.  
Everett Wren, surveyor.

**Introductory.**  
To the Members of the McCracken County Fiscal Court:

Gentlemen: In endeavoring to comply with the resolution passed by you, requesting that I should compile a statement, in a general way, as to the fiscal affairs of the county, and as to what has been accomplished by this administration, I feel that I am to be excused for the apparent lack of details indicated, because of the limited amount of time at my disposal. In submitting the report, it has been my purpose to be as accurate as to aggregate amounts as the records themselves will show, and a verification can easily be had by comparison of statements herein made with the records in the various departments referred to.

I feel assured that the reading of this report will at least afford information to many who are not conversant with the affairs of the county. It, indeed, it does not furnish a source of satisfaction and pride to you gentlemen, who compose the membership of the McCracken fiscal court. I am not unmindful of the fact that a public officer is a common and usual target and object of criticism, subject to the varying whims and fancies of certain classes of people, and while I know that this court has not escaped, yet I feel that the calm and dispassionate judgment of the future will pronounce pleasing criticism upon your administration rather than censure. The fickleness of popular mind and clamor will give applause or censure, just as its immediate needs or demands may require. That which may be a thing of approval today is as liable to be held reprehensible tomorrow. Transient motives for complaint based upon either personal or political expectations are uncertain and unreliable guides or standards for a public officer, and common observation would justify that only the coming of time will give the real need of praise or just disapproval of the administration of any officer. With the acceptance of such as the proper test, the members of the court need expect anything except the applause of the future.

**Retrospection.**  
Before going into the subject matter proper, it might be well to refer to conditions confronting this court at the time of assuming your offices and taking charge of the affairs of the county. This should be permitted for the reason that the public should be made acquainted with the embarrassing obstacles, necessary to be overcome, before any attempt at public improvements could even be made. In 1902, for instance, you found that there was a deficit in the sinking fund of \$60,000, that should have been levied and collected as taxes by a preceding administration for the purpose of paying the principal and interest, amounting to \$500,000, in the form of railway bonds. Permit me to state, however, that this deficit was not the result of any mismanagement of funds collected, but merely the result of failure to levy the necessary tax to which the county was sacredly pledged. At the time referred to not one dollar of the bonded indebtedness had been paid. We were required to pay five per cent interest upon this indebtedness, as well as collect the fractional part of the principal, as required by law. These two items, alone, necessitated the collection, annually as taxes upon the people of over \$40,000, and when raising the additional \$60,000 was added it became an apparent burden, not easily carried or thrown aside. Whatever might have been the ambitions of the court, it was mandatory upon you that this deficit be at once removed. You also found an indebtedness upon the roads of the county amounting to \$39,800, contracted previous to your induction into office. In addition to the above your county court house was in a deplorably dilapidated condition, not being provided with any of the ordinary comforts reasonably to be expected. Its condition was such, as well as that of the jail, as to necessitate immediate and extensive repairs, both the court house and jail being eye-sores in appearance and agreement in fact, for many reasons, the heating and lighting of the buildings being not only unsatisfactory but exceedingly extravagant as to cost. The court house was used principally as a pasture for the many cows and horses in the neighborhood, and was not an ungainly sight to behold. In its unattended condition was cause of much exceedingly just criticism of the people. In addition to this no more reprehensible of affairs could have existed

than that which was shown by the building known as the almshouse, on the Mayfield road, a building with some ten or twelve rooms, ill-heated and lighted, where an average of 30 to 40 unfortunate inmates were huddled together. It could truthfully have been remarked that it was a building where sunshine and the rain could pour through the same aperture of the roof. No greater disgrace nor self-rebuke could have been than this building with rotten roof, unchinked floors and unplastered walls that stood as an indictment of indecency and unkindness to the poor, against McCracken county. Nor was this all. Not one mile of gravel road had ever been built by the county; not a steel bridge had been built for 25 years. There was not a bridge, not a culvert that was built, unless it was a wooden one. In fact, you found yourselves burdened with indebtedness of over a half-million dollars, long-neglected public buildings, no home for the poor, dirt roads that washed away with the coming of each year, wooden bridges with an average life of six years, and never an attempt having been made at substantial improvement, either as to buildings, bridges or roads. Surely, it was not a condition of affairs for pleasing contemplation, and I dare say, was one as you have found out, not easily remedied or changed.

At that time the tax rate, including that for state purposes, was \$1.42 upon every one hundred dollars worth of property of the county, as well as the poll tax of \$1.50 also imposed. The amount of money collected for county purposes at such time was \$100,000. The total valuation of property, including franchise and all railroad tax, amounted to twelve million dollars. It will thus be seen that a levy of one cent would bring about twelve hundred

dollars for county purposes. The average valuation upon farm lands as shown by the books of the assessor during that period averaged \$11.40 upon improved land of the county, the people of the county paying about two-ninths of taxes while the remainder was paid by the city. Since that time there has been an advance in valuation, so far as concerns farm land, of \$260,000, as shown by the books of the assessor, while the valuation in the city has increased two million and six hundred thousand dollars. I refer to these matters of taxation in order to show that then, as now, the county outside of the city paid relatively a small portion of the taxes generally. It must be equally as patent that while the county outside of the city pays a small portion of the taxes in comparison to the city, yet it gets more than two-ninths of the benefits. While of course the roads and bridges are a benefit to the city, yet the immediate benefit and the constant use of the public highways and bridges more directly is furnished to the county. I can say, however, that notwithstanding what may appear to be the apparent inequality of burdens of taxation the citizens of Paducah have given a most cordial and patriotic support of the administration as well as the substantial tax payers of the county, who have always appreciated the taxpaying element of the city.

Naturally, there has been an increase of values, so that the assessed valuation of all property now amounts to fourteen million one hundred and twenty-three thousand dollars. Recognizing the necessity of enforced and substantial economy, the first effort upon the part of the fiscal court to overcome the difficulties spoken of resulted in minimizing the tax rate as to the various funds and departments as much as possible, in order that the sinking fund could be benefited thereby. During the first year, nothing was done in the way of road work except to repair the dirt roads and bridges, less than ten thousand dollars being expended in the year 1903 for road purposes. The county levy was reduced and every effort made looking toward economy in order that the sinking fund could be restored to its legal status. This was done at the end of two years, without any department seriously suffering, and done, too, without any raise either as to valuation of property or of the tax rate. When once restored, the sinking fund has been vigilantly taken care of by you and manifestly, handled with great ability by your commis-

sioners, R. J. Barber and J. H. Burnett, respectively. And when it will be recalled as to the deficit of sixty thousand, when the sinking fund had nothing in it, and now to know that the same fund has \$135,000, more than enough to replace by law, it must be with a pardonable pride, that such is seen to be true.

**Payment of Debts.**  
As before remarked none of the bonded indebtedness had ever been paid, yet during the time when every fund was curtailed and economy was being rigidly practiced, the sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) was paid upon the bonded indebtedness. Believing that a lower rate of interest upon one series of railroad bonds could be secured than the prevailing rate of five per cent upon \$100,000 of a given issue, you will recall negotiation entered into with bondholders in New York City by you looking to a refunding of these bonds at four per cent (4 per cent.) Magistrate R. J. Barber, who was then commissioner, after a great deal of difficulty did succeed in refunding that series of bonds and of the amount referred to at four per cent, for 30 years. This transaction alone enabled the county to both make and save a sum of \$20,000, reflecting great credit upon your commissioner, because of the apparent impossibility of securing the money, or rather, purchases of the bonds during the hard times of 1903.

There will be due and owing by the county in the year 1913 the sum of \$150,000 bonded indebtedness. As has been stated before, all the interest amounting to over \$200,000, has been paid upon the full amount of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) of indebtedness. Now, to meet this indebtedness of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars we have \$135,000 in the sinking fund, only fifteen thousand

(\$15,000) dollars more to be raised in four years' time. This will be a very easy matter and will enable the incoming administration to make a still further reduction in the rate of taxes for the purpose of the sinking fund. The rate of 12 cents even if there should not be a natural raise as to valuation of property for assessment purposes, would be ample protection for this fund, enabling the easy payment of interest up to that time, as well as providing for the principal of \$150,000. It will be a pleasurable accomplishment for me to pay you when I recall the necessity at one time in the history of the county, of fixing the rate of the sinking fund at over 41 cents on every one hundred dollars worth of property, as compared with the small rate of 16 cents now levied for that purpose. I frankly confess to you that it was never expected by me, nor by any of us, that so much could be accomplished for this fund as has been done.

This bonded indebtedness has always been the barrier that has met every effort of progressive stride by the county in the way of public improvements, and has always been the cloud that has hovered over us as a county. The county is to be congratulated that, at last, some light is being seen. In 1913 we know that two hundred thousand dollars of this indebtedness will be absolutely wiped out, and my confidence in the incoming administration is such, that we can have the assurance of the further reduction of taxes for this fund. After that time the interest will only be \$14,000 annually, and the average fractional part of the principal to be collected will be slight for the necessities of the situation, knowing that there will be a natural increase in values of the property for the purposes of taxation.

**Improvement of the Court House.**  
In a retrospective sense, I desire to call your attention to conditions existing seven years ago as compared to those of now. There was no floor in the court house that was safe. There was not a wall that had either been painted or papered for 25 years. With all of the inconvenience previously referred to, might be added the fact of the barn-like appearance of the two court rooms and all the offices at that time. There was no protection whatever for the records of the county, in either the county clerk's office or that of the circuit clerk. The records had been permitted to be stored on wooden shelves in each of the vaults often hidden by accumulations of dust, and more often being injured and destroyed by rats and mice because of no covering or casing other than wood into which

they could be placed. Perhaps, no greater source for just complaint or criticism existed than was found by reason of the crude condition and arrangement of shelves in both of these vaults. These records were worth more than several million dollars to the people and were entitled to some security and preservation. The accompanying cuts of the two vaults since improved, will give some idea as to what has been done by you. The total cost of the rearrangement and installation of the metallic shelves and cases amounted to \$2,165.35.

Both of the offices of the court house were equipped with serviceable furniture, papered and painted so as to afford some comfort for the occupants and the public in the transaction of public business. Both of the clerks' offices were furnished with modern machines with which records were copied, so that the old system of long-hand could be dispensed with and the improved typewritten substituted.

The county and circuit court rooms were remodeled, papered and painted as well as being properly carpeted and otherwise improved. The changes made in each instance are pleasingly noticeable, when the half-plastered and smoke begrimed walls and bare floors of a few years ago are remembered.

All of these improvements were made at a cost of \$2,650.

In this connection, an improvement of great value was made by your remodeling of the basement so as to have toilet and store room, at a cost of \$1,780.

**The Heating and Lighting Plant.**  
The county has probably had more trouble and annoyance on account of unsuitable means of heating the court house and jail (and probably the circuit judges have lost more religion on account of same), than from any

was necessary that the county spend an additional sum of \$460 for piping and the wrapping of the same with asbestos, underneath the floorings. From the report by an inspector of the company giving insurance upon our boiler and machinery, I am informed that the plant is in the most excellent condition in every particular.

**The Jail.**

The writer has, for six years, industriously sought to have a new building to take the place of the jail building we now have, which is in fact, but little more than a sarlatine at its best. It is not only the reverse of being commodious, but is so constructed that it is of necessity a dangerous building, impossible to be kept clean, and with its old age, together with its outrageously inconvenient apartments, is a disgrace to the county. Within the last few years you have expended in attempting to repair the same, the enormous sum of seven thousand three hundred dollars (\$7,300). There is no feature of the building, however, that is commendable about it that is commendable in its original construction, is the only one in existence in the United States, all others having been long ago discarded because of impracticability. The interior of the building will not permit of any modern plumbing, nor, as before remarked, will it permit of any degree of cleanliness. Mr. Baker has resorted to every method possible and every device conceivable in an attempt to so maintain the same, but despite his every effort he has only succeeded in convincing himself, as well as all others, of but one fact, that being that the county must have a new jail. Upon estimates having been made by concerns throughout the country there is no doubt that a modern, up-to-date jail building, with all necessary engine of steel, can be built for the sum of \$25,000. It has been repeatedly condemned by numerous grand juries, and it certainly could seem that the county should regard it as a mandatory duty that a new one be built, especially in view of the fact that numerous and successful attempts at escape have been made by prisoners, notwithstanding the vigilance of the jailer and his deputies.

**The Court House Yard.**

Perhaps, after your humble county judge has passed away and has almost been forgotten he will be recalled in memory by reason of some unjustly charged person who desires to voice his kick and complaint against the flowers in the court house yard. I dare say, that of all the things of omission and commission charged against me in attempting to carry out your wishes, the loudest roar has been from a non-taxpaying element that objected to the improvement made in this respect. Petitions have been presented to me from the county, remonstrating against the great extravagance of about \$350 annually expended in an attempt to beautify the premises surrounding the county court house and jail, the amount aggregated \$416. Equally as persistent have been the criticisms that have been poured forth, as vials of wrath, because you saw fit to direct me to construct walks in and around the court house yard, as well as the curbing. The walks and curbing cost the county the sum of \$1,817.20. Prior to that time there were gravel driveways through the yard, and a fence of iron seven feet in height enclosed the yard; and upon the inside the weeds grew as high as the fence. I have neither an apology nor excuse to offer for the part taken by myself, nor do I apprehend that there will be much respect by the members of the fiscal court upon this question. The people of Paducah pay more than five-sixths of taxes of the entire county, and are certainly entitled to know and see that public property in their midst can be at least given some decent attention, and that, too, without exacting criticisms of public officers for doing so. The people will demand a continuation of this feature of county affairs, and it is the hope and prediction of the writer that the flowers will continue to grow.

**The Sanitarium.**

In this book I present the reader with a picture of the old almshouse, upon the Mayfield road, and of the new one near Lone Oak, built in 1907. The old building and site was sold in 1907 for the sum of \$6,600. Its inadequacy, lack of convenience and necessary equipment, I imagine, were too conspicuous to require or permit of discussion or argument, and, as a result, the fiscal court took the progressive step toward the establishment of an institution, the superior of which is not found in Kentucky. Indeed, it is one of the sad conditions upon our public institutions of the country that the unfortunate and poor are so much neglected. It would seem to be the policy of a certain species of government, that our last thoughts is of the destitute and needy. Every community, it is true, has its much-dreaded "poor house." As a rule it is approached with much hesitancy and repulsion as is the pest house. As often it is found to be a place of horror rather than one of harbor. A regrettable conception of the needs of a home for the poor is too often found and evidenced by the unsightly and filthy buildings located in some obscure section of a county, where human beings pass away the remaining years of their lives with but little, if any, of the comforts of life, and removed far from the sunshine of the world. Why are not the destitute and unfortunate of the world, who become wards of the law, entitled to its kind care rather than the coldness, to its smiles rather than its sneers, to its care rather than its curse, and to the best rather than the bad? Helpless, aged and infirm, crippled and deformed and, above all, clothed only with the cloak of poverty, what more eloquent appeal can be made for the benevolence of the law than this vast army of wretchedness will ever present, daily, throughout the world? It is not only the province, but it is the duty, and it is the unquestioned and everlasting element of the law of God and man, that the poor are worthy of and should have that treatment which emanates from the highest type of humanity of the world.

I take it, that with such as the view of the fiscal court, our new sanitarium was constructed. In its

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entirely it was designed, as it in fact is, as a modern hospital, with all possible conveniences for the taking care of the unfortunate. It was built at a cost of \$25,000, so far as concerns the building. The site cost \$1,200. It is located four miles from Paducah, and is easily reached by gravel road.

There are four separate wards—two for white males and females and two for the colored males and females. Each ward is provided with a wide concrete porch running the entire length of each building. All the wards are provided with bath rooms, etc., the water being furnished from the county water works, located upon the premises, as well as one of the most modern and approved sewerage systems, with which every building is connected. Each building is constructed as nearly fire-proof as it is possible to do so, all of them being of brick, and with slate for roofing. In the event of fire, however, each of the buildings is provided with fire hose connecting directly with the water tank, which is 30 feet in height with a capacity of 2,000 gallons of water always on hand. The water was secured at a depth of 118 feet and is pronounced to be the best and healthiest water in McCracken county.

The location is ideal. Situated upon a large hill, the buildings with the surrounding 12 acres, form a pleasing picture. The grounds will permit of easy improvement and decoration and ought, in a few years, to be the most beautiful spot in the county. Over 75 shade trees have been set out along the sides of the driveways and upon the large lawn, and within a few years will have attained a good growth.

At this time there are 31 patients at the institution. The superintendent, Mr. W. A. Thompson, is known as a kind-hearted man and accords the inmates humane treatment, and has conducted the institution in a highly creditable manner. No complaint from a reliable or responsible source has ever been made as to the management of the sanitarium. The inmates are given wholesome food and good clothing, and are visited each day by the county physician Dr. L. E. Young.

The cost of maintenance is borne entirely by the county and will average about \$6,000, including the pay of the superintendent and all other expenses.

**The County Cemetery.**  
Located about one-quarter of a mile from the sanitarium and in the rear of it, is to be found the county cemetery. This was bought after the location of the sanitarium, and with the work that has been done upon the same, cost the sum of \$700. The entire site consists of a little more than four acres, the same being laid off into lots and each lot being provided with stone markers and numbered for purposes of identification. It will be understood that every lot made upon being taken into the institution, is registered and all the necessary details of description recorded in the superintendent's office, where any information desired can be had as to the history of any patient, such as the race, age, date of admission, etc.

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